

You Can Fight Back:

Emotional and Physical Self Defense

By Leah Oviedo

.....

Introduction

Part I **Emotional Self Defense**

Part II **Physical Self Defense**

Part III **Living Fierce**

Resources

**“I have learned over the years that when one’s mind is made up,
this diminishes fear.” ~ Rosa Parks**

.....

Introduction

Picture a girl in High School walking out of class. A boy comes up behind her, pushes her through the doorway, and laughs as she stumbles. This boy has been harassing her for a year. She is very shy and scared to stand up for herself. Since elementary school she has been teased and beaten and become used to being a victim. One violent attack in Jr. High was so bad she never went back to that school. For so long she thinks this is just the way it is. She's not cool, she is awkward and shy so of course she gets teased. It's just how life has become for her. But this moment is different; this push was just too much.

She swirls around and gives the boy a verbal smack down. She angrily and loudly tells him to leave her alone, that she is sick of him bullying her, and that she won't put up with him anymore. Her adrenaline is pumping and everyone is staring. The boy is just standing there. She is afraid the teacher is going to come out and she will be in trouble so she starts walking away. Nothing happens. The other students whisper and she quickly goes to the next class.

Amazingly that boy stops bullying her. She feels so much better and less afraid of going to school. There are occasional incidents of teasing and bullies from other students, but she doesn't stand for it anymore. She still feels awkward and shy, but she also has this small feeling that she is capable of being tough. It's a great feeling.

That girl was me. I was a perpetual victim for so long that it became part of my identity. I had a loving supportive family, a few friends, and I was happy at home. The missing parts were my lacking any ability to solve problems, fear of confrontation, not knowing how to fight, and very low self esteem.

There were many things that led up to my moment of empowerment. Mostly I was just sick and tired of being picked on. I knew that I didn't deserve to be treated badly. At that moment I was more afraid of the bullying to increase in violence like other bullies in the past than what might happen if I tried to stop it. For years I had been spiraling into a deep depression and wanting badly to take my own life. I felt alone and terrified. Pretending that nothing was wrong and continuously allowing bullies to push me around just wasn't working anymore. It was too much. That last shove by a boy that hated me for reasons I couldn't understand pushed me to fight back.

Change didn't happen overnight. It was some time before I was able to stand up to bullies on a regular basis. I stayed depressed for a long time, but I am so grateful for that moment because it was the beginning of not hiding anymore. I was ready to be fierce and I just needed some more experiences and time to make that happen.

Since that day in High School many violent and scary experiences encouraged me to become a trained self defense instructor. All of those experiences brought me to writing this book. I was assaulted by a drunken frat boy on a college campus in broad daylight. I have been verbally harassed and physically assaulted walking down the street and sitting on the bus. I saw friends and family in abusive relationships and listened to one of my best friends as she tearfully recounted how her boyfriend raped her. It was another decade until I realized that empowered feeling again.

The experience that really woke me up was working at a domestic violence and sexual assault resource center. I saw so many women and girls who were emotionally and physically abused by boyfriends, fathers and husbands. Sometimes they had visible bruises, but most often they were emotionally broken and scared. The educational trainings we had were just as heart breaking and depressing. It wasn't long before I realized that preventing other girls and women from being victims was what I needed to do.

From childhood I was blessed with a handful of strong independent women in my life, but they were so much older that I did not see a connection of how I could be strong like them. I strived to imitate them since they never seemed weak I tried to never seem weak either. I was also painfully shy about opening up and asking for help. I convinced myself to stay silent and that caused me to waste years depressed and feeling pathetic.

After everything I went through I really want to help other girls and women from living everyday afraid. I have created an outline for both physical and emotional self defense. Both are imperative for not just surviving, but living a healthy life. Too often, emotional abuse is considered less dangerous than physical abuse. This idea creates a culture that treats emotional pain as not important. It enforces the belief that words can't hurt. The saying "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is ludicrous. Of course words hurt and they are especially potent coming from family, partners, friends, peers, and authority figures.

Do you know or have you read about children and teens that kill themselves over peer bullying or women that repeatedly return to abusive relationships? Nobody wants to be rejected so we put up with it. We are made to feel like we should automatically know how to solve problems. We have become helpless because we are not taught or encouraged to fight back. That needs to change right now.

.....

One: Emotional Self Defense

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Intuition
- 3) Warning Signs
- 4) Communicate
- 5) Find Solutions
- 6) Be Strong
- 7) Healthy Confrontation
- 8) Think About It

INTRODUCTION

Emotional self defense is the first step in preventing violence. Prevention is the theme of this book. If you can keep yourself out of violent situations and learn different ways to handle harassment you will save yourself,

your family, and your friends a lot of pain. In the following pages you will learn to use your intuition to be aware of warning signs. You will also learn how to be strong by communicating and problem solving.

Even with precautions and smarts, anyone can be a victim. If you do all that you can and you are still attacked or abused, **it is not your fault**. Abusers come in all genders, sizes, colors and cultures. They choose to hurt and that is their fault, not the people they hurt. Victim blame is a popular phenomenon of making those who suffer feel as if they did something wrong. It's disgusting.

Do not fall into a victim blame attitude. Yes if you juggle saws and cut your arm, then it is your fault, but getting hurt by someone else after you went into a situation that may or may not be dangerous is still not your fault. We each choose and are responsible for how we treat others. We cannot blame someone else if we hurt them and say they were asking for it.

Three Points of Prevention

- **Keep an open mind towards your intuition.**
- **Be aware of warning signs.**
- **Have a strong sense of self worth so you can stand up for yourself and fight back.**

.....

INTUITION

Intuition is not some magical quality that only certain people are endowed with. EVERYONE has it. You simply need to be aware of this inner guidance system. Intuition is also called “following your gut” or “listening to your heart”. Label it however you want. You have it and you have the ability to use it.

- Do you ever get that feeling in the pit of your stomach or thoughts in your head that something is not quite right?
- Have warning bells gone off that are telling you to get out of a situation as soon as possible?
- Do you think maybe this person has an ulterior motive?
- Does a story you are being told sound untrue?

These are all feelings of intuition and you can follow those feelings to keep yourself, your friends and your family safe. Sometimes intuition can also feel like nerves. So until you are really in tune with your inner guide you can look for warning signs. Those we will go over later.

Record your intuitive decisions in a journal. When you encounter an important event write down what happened, how you felt, what your intuition told you and what action you took. You can later return to your journal to look for patterns and to see how often you do or don't listen to yourself and whether something was a good or bad decision.

Did you follow your instincts?
 Did you ignore your instincts?
 What was the outcome?

Ask Your Intuition

What about this person or situation feels wrong?

Does this remind me of something bad that happened before?

How did that turn out?

What should I do in this situation?

What will be the best first step?

.....

WARNING SIGNS

When you are with new people it is important to listen to what they say, watch how they interact with others, and be aware of what they want from you. You can get warning signs from people *and* places.

How do they treat you? If someone treats you with respect you are not as likely to be used or abused. However even in a good relationship there are warning signs when a person suddenly changes their attitude around you. Do they act different around their family or friends compared to when you are alone? Is everything all about them? Do they act like your problems aren't important?

Are they being more friendly than usual? A manipulator will often charm you into doing what they want without considering how it may affect you. A popular example of this is when someone you admire asks you to do something that you are not comfortable with, but you do it anyway to prove your worth to them. Often the asker knows that you are going against your gut, but feel they can make you do whatever they want.

Did they just guilt trip you? An abuser will use guilt as a tool to make you feel as if you should do what they want. They usually cry "poor me" or insist that you always get your way. Guilt is used when someone feels bad about what they did, to deflect blame, or to get revenge. When you are assaulted with guilt turn the tables. Ask the other person if they are purposely trying to guilt trip you. Ask if they are feeling bad and would like to talk about it. These questions let the person know that you are not visiting guilt town with them. You can walk away or try and find a solution together.

Do they say disparaging or negative remarks about others, your gender or race? If your date puts down your gender or race and constantly refers to stereotyping others, then they do not respect you. If your friend has prejudices that you personally find offensive, their view is not likely to change. People often have this idea that we can change someone else so that person is more like us and thus easier to get along with. The flaw in this idea is that real change must come from the individual choosing to change. Look for statements that begin with "I'm not racist, but..." or "I'm not sexist, but..."

Strange Places and Faces

If you are in an unfamiliar area be aware of your surroundings. Only you

can decide if this new place is safe.

Is it clean or dirty? If the area you are in is in disrepair or very dirty than the people who are there may not have respect for that area, other people who live there, or visitors. This is not a safe place to be. If the place is clean, but the people have a negative attitude it can also be unsafe. So it is important to pay attention to the people and your surroundings.

Are you in a well lit or public area with lots of people? If you are in an isolated area and something happens to you such as an injury, harassment, or an attack there may not be anyone to help you.

- Are other people friendly and polite?
- Do you feel ignored or are people rude towards you?
- What will you do if a problem arises?
- Do you see a place to go for help such as a police station, hospital or welcome center?
- Are you with someone you trust to stay with you and stand up for you?



COMMUNICATE

Use your voice. A lot of problems can be prevented when we clearly communicate what we want, need, and do or do not like. People are not mind readers. You may feel like your attitude is telling people what you think, which is often true, but this is a dangerous idea to bank your safety on. Saying one thing and acting in an opposing manner will give other people a chance to take advantage of you or think that you want something you don't. Keep your words and actions in sync.

When someone is harassing you tell them that you do not like it and ask them to stop. It is important to use an even tone of voice. Usually when we get upset we use a mocking or angry tone. This tone will only escalate the situation by creating a defensive feeling in the other person. Staying calm is also important if you need to report harassment to the authorities or a supervisor.

There are occasions where letting your anger shine through can protect you, but this is in the face of immediate physical danger, not emotional abuse. Emotional abusers want to rile you up and make you do

something that looks bad on your part. This gives them an “excuse” to punish you. Keep calm and speak in a firm, even tone. If they cannot get a reaction out of you they may leave you alone. I have had several instances of harassment where I ignored the person and they stopped bothering me.

Depending on their personality type or whether they are under the influence, ignoring is not the best option. Sometimes you need to use your words. Here is a list of what you can say to an emotional abuser.

- I don't appreciate that sort of talk about women (people/ race/ religion/ orientation).
- I don't feel that is funny. That is not funny to me.
- Stop doing that. Stop saying that.
- You do not have a right to harass me.
- This school (or job) is not an appropriate place to say those things or act that way.
- I will report you to a supervisor if you continue to harass me.
- I will call the authorities if you continue to harass me.

It is imperative when dating or in a relationship to communicate your wants and needs in the beginning. Sadly no matter how much you try, *most* violent situations can only be prevented by the assailant.

Remember that it is *never* your fault if you are abused, stalked, or raped. However *a few* situations can be avoided by simply communicating and being up front about your feelings, expectations and limits. This happens because by being aware of warning signs and listening you learn to stay away from dangerous people.

If you are not looking for a sexual relationship than tell your partner from the start. If you do not want to have sex with a date tell them before you go to their apartment.

- I like you and want to get to know you, but I am not ready for a sexual (physical) relationship.
- Kissing does not mean that we will have sex.
- I don't want to see you anymore.

- I am not “being a tease”, no means no!

If the other person refuses to let you go or leave you alone yell for help. It is said that yelling the words *Fire* or *Police* are more likely to bring help than *Help* or *Rape*. If you are in a place you know then seek help from an authority figure. If they cannot help you find the next person in charge and so on until you can find someone to help you. Explaining the situation clearly and communicating your distress is important if you need help. Setting boundaries from the start gives you power and shows that you are not an easy target or pushover.



FIND SOLUTIONS

It is important to figure out if you are dealing with a difficult person or a difficult situation. Think of all the times you have lost your temper or became angry because you were in a situation that felt dangerous. It is very easy for well adjusted people to lose their cool and that is very different than someone who is simply being purposely difficult. It is also easy for people with mean intentions to use and hurt us. We must be our first defense against them. If you are being harassed or feel like an assault is coming use the steps below.

Take these steps to find a solution and keep your cool.

- 1) Neutralize your emotions. Allowing your emotions to run wild causes you to become irrational.
- 2) Identify if this person is being difficult because of the situation or because they are purposely being difficult.
- 3) Control the situation before it gets out of hand. Do you need to move to a safe space or a neutral environment?
- 4) Consider your different options to reach a solution or compromise.
- 5) Walk away without burning bridges.

Neutralize

Consciously make a choice to calm your emotions. Neutralize by visualizing how you want this situation to end and reminding yourself that you are in control of your reactions. In the beginning it is important to not get caught up in all the little points. Focus on the biggest point or the root of the problem and go from there. Don't get

caught up in fighting a war. Instead neutralize the first disagreement and turn it into a discussion.

Identify the type of person you are dealing with.

Is the situation causing problems?

Is the other person purposely being mean or just reacting to the situation?

Is the other person acting difficult and arguing because this is how they solve their problems?

Is this a person who is always difficult?

Are they in a position of power and used to taking what they want?

Empathize with the other person instead of opposing them. Ask the other person questions.

What is wrong?

Why is this so important to you?

What do you feel you will lose if this doesn't go your way?

Does this remind you of a similar situation in the past that did not work out?

How do you wish that had been settled?

Now that you have a better picture of what is happening, ask yourself questions.

What do I have at stake?

Is this an argument I can win?

Do I need to win this time?

Will this turn into a long term problem?

Is it only a problem in the short term?

Remember, if the other person is attacking you they are attempting to control you.

Figure out how to keep the argument or problem from escalating.

Can you find an alternative solution?

Can you control the outcome by changing your view?

If this problem does not need to be solved immediately can you reach

- out and ask for assistance?
- Who are your allies?
- Who can you ask that is neutral?
- Can you find a mediator?
- Can you ask a supervisor?

Start a dialogue. Ask the other person to explain their side instead of simply attacking. Then explain your side.

Find alternative solutions by asking the other person questions.

- What would you do in my position?
- What if we left part of the problem for another time? Then could we find a solution to the most pressing part of the problem?
- What would be the pros and cons of doing it this way or that way?

Walk away without burning bridges.

Some problems cannot be solved right away. There are times when we or another person aren't willing to budge. We can all make bad decisions when we are upset, but some people are not willing to find solutions or compromise. If this is the case you may want to walk away and stay clear of them. If both of you have reviewed all the options and cannot agree on a solution or compromise than it is time to stop or take a break.

We can't always control how a problem turns out, but we can always choose how we act. Do you want to look back and know that you tried your best to find a peaceful solution? Or do you want to look back and know that your anger, pride, or stubbornness made a problem worse? The choice is yours. Just like a bully is responsible for hurting someone, you are responsible for how you act in every situation.



BE STRONG

Doubting our own strengths and capabilities turns us into victims. Each and every one of us has specific talents and qualities that allow us to

solve problems and adapt to new situations. By focusing on those skills you will feel competent and not be afraid to take action.

Are you more extroverted or introverted? Introverted people tend to solve problems slowly and cautiously. They look for more solutions than those available right now. Their outlook is that by weighing each solution equally then there is less chance that the problem will recur.

Extroverts tend to solve problems by picking the quickest and most obvious solutions. Their outlook is that if something is easy to solve than there is no reason to waste time looking at different options.

Both personality styles have good or bad aspects depending on the situation at hand. In risky situations such as assault you need to make quick decisions that will keep you safe. In risky, but not immediately dangerous situations such as emotional abuse it is good to consider all your options and deliberate on one that will keep you safe. Solving problems based on our own personal style as opposed to someone else's idea works best. You just have to be brave enough to follow through.

Finding a balance of knowing when to be aggressive or to stay calm takes time. A lot you will learn through trial and error. If you remind yourself to be aware of how you react and what works or doesn't than you will learn what you are capable of. Ask yourself questions.

- How do I react to stress?
- Does my reaction make problems worse?
- Am I willing to change that reaction?
- In what way can that reaction be turned into a positive action?
- What are examples of times when I handled stress well?
- Practice, practice, practice! Teach yourself to react in a way that does not escalate negative emotions or violence.



HEALTHY CONFRONTATION

When confronting any difficult person or discussing an uncomfortable issue it is important to keep the conversation from escalating into an argument by establishing a non-threatening environment.

- Use eye contact and call people by their first name.
- Your body language should be relaxed. Do not slouch or act timid. Do not loom over others or push into their personal space.
- Do not glare or raise your voice in anger. Try your best to keep a friendly or at least a calm demeanor.
- When people feel attacked or stressed out it is easy to want to fight back in the same way. The saying you can't fight fire with fire is true. It only causes more negativity and lessens the chance of a sustainable resolution.
- State your case about the current problem. Don't bring up unrelated problems. You want to focus on one problem at a time so the other person doesn't feel like they are being bullied.
- Listen to the other person without interrupting. Consider that this person has discriminatory views based on how they were raised. Bad habits are hard to break, and change takes time. Listening allows you to formulate an intelligent response. Shooting from the lip without thinking can turn ugly fast. Hold your cool and you will not only have the upper hand, but time to figure out a solution. Since you are fighting for a safe environment stooping to the level of your harassers and attacking them simply creates less safety.



THINK ABOUT IT

- Can you think back to instances when you were emotionally abused?
- How do you feel after someone has manipulated you or used guilt on you?

- How can you create a dialogue with your female friends about emotional abuse?
- How can you create a dialogue with your male friends about emotional abuse?
- What advice can you give to your daughter, niece, or younger women about your own experiences with emotional abuse?
- Have you ever been harassed at work or in school?
- What actions did you take to stop the harassment?
- If you went to a supervisor or teacher what action did they take?
- Are you fearful of standing up to harassment?
- Is it fair that the way you dress, the religion you believe, or the culture you are from defines how people treat you?
- Are you comfortable with speaking up for yourself or others when you are in an unfriendly situation?
- How do you feel when stories of harassment are turned into jokes?
- How do you feel about standing up to and complaining about offensive behavior?

.....

Two: Physical Self Defense

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Awareness = Prevention
- 3) Use a Combination

4) More Moves

5) Reporting Assault

.....

INTRODUCTION

You can fight back! Don't make up excuses that prevent you from protecting yourself. Being female doesn't mean that you can't or shouldn't use physical force to protect yourself, your family, and friends from violent assault. While these self defense moves are designed for girls and women I encourage you to also teach young boys. Both girls and boys are targets for molestation and abduction so it is important to instill in children the capability of physical self defense if someone hurts them.

If you are attacked and injured it is important to know that it was not your fault. No matter if you were walking alone, what you were wearing, or if you were under the influence of drugs or alcohol, it is not your fault! When someone is intent on hurting you to either steal your money, scare you, or rape you it is because they have a problem. The attacker chooses to act violently. The attacker is always at fault.

Some attacks are meant to scare or hurt and some are meant to kill. Since you have no way of knowing what another person is thinking it is best to defend yourself as if they are planning to kill you. Be prepared for the worst because you never know. Memorize these physical moves so you will be a survivor and not a victim.

.....

AWARENESS = PREVENTION

Whether you are walking alone or with a group, day or night, in “good” or “bad” neighborhoods you have to BE AWARE! If someone gets within 10 feet of you than make noise.

- Pull out your phone and make a call.
- Put distance and space between you and them, wave and yell “Hi, Sarah” in the direction of an imaginary friend.
- Cross the street or go inside a store.
- Act crazy to scare them off.
- Take a photo or video and share it with your family, friends, or share it online. Documentation can help if you are attacked.

Pay attention. If someone gets too close, firmly and loudly tell them to stop.

Yell loudly:

STOP
GET BACK
POLICE
FIRE

and move away from them.

In my experience, there are three main types of assailants. There is the jerk who is inebriated with something to prove, the bully looking for a victim, and the sociopath who wants to hurt you. It can be hard to tell in the moment of fear so go ahead and fight back with all you go.

.....

USE A COMBINATION

Normally one hit is *not* enough to disable an attacker, which is why I was taught to memorize a combination of simple moves to fight back. Below is a simple 4 step combination. The intent is so you can get to safety, not so you can become a superhero. The freeze stance gives you space and lets your attacker know that you are not an easy target. The palm strike and groin kick inflict pain on sensitive areas of the face and groin. The

knee strike can disable the attacker by striking their upper body or head.

Many attackers yell and threaten so you will be paralyzed with fear. To counteract their scare tactic remember to YELL with each strike. Give them the same treatment they are giving you. This is not a time to be polite. Make noise just in case someone is close enough to help you. This person wants to hurt you so make sure that doesn't happen.

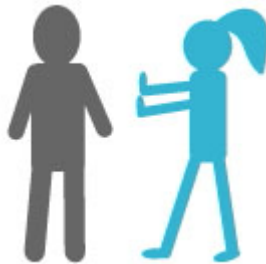
Don't ever go to a second location! If someone says "*If you will be quiet and come with me I won't hurt you*" that person knows that your current location is too public and they might get caught. They want to take you some place isolated so nobody can interfere. They will hurt you, so never go to a second location!

The next section contain illustrations for basic self defense moves. These are designed to disable and cause pain for the attacker so you can escape to safety.

The Freeze Stance

Create a firm position by standing with your legs shoulder length apart. Put your arms up as if you were doing push ups to put space between you. This is classic stance that lets that pers on know that you will protect your body and it gives them a chance to pause.

Either extend and straighten your arms with your palms facing out to put distance between you OR bend your elbows and keep your hands closer to your body. Yell or in a firm clear voice say, "NO", "STOP" or "GET BACK". If you need to draw attention from others yell "POLICE", "I NEED HELP" or "FIRE".



Once you have created a physical boundary with your arms you can use one or all three of the following moves in a combination to stop the attacker.

2) The Palm Strike

Use the heel of your palm to strike the attacker's nose, eyes, cheek or forehead. Your goal is to disable the person so you can get away, so when you strike use all your strength. Step forward towards them to give yourself extra momentum. Continue to yell for help as you strike your attacker.



3) The Groin Kick

Kick as hard as you can. Bring your foot right up under their legs or use your knee to hit the target. Use all your might to cause enough pain so they cannot hurt you. Remember, if someone is physically attacking you they want to hurt you. Don't hesitate to hurt them so you can get to a safe place. This is a classic defense move against men because it works! Remember to YELL with each strike.



4) The Knee Strike

This move works best if your attacker bends over from a previous hit. Grab their head or shoulders and pull them down while at the same time lifting your knee up to hit their stomach or face. Once you have kneed your attacker push them away from you and run to safety. Remember to YELL with each strike.



VITAL POINTS

Most likely your attacker will be stronger than you, but you can still cause a lot of pain by striking the vital points.

EYES

(gouge with your thumbs or jab with your fingers)

EARS

(grab an ear or both, dig your finger nails in and pull hard)

NOSE

(use the heel of your palm or your fist)

THROAT

(karate chop to the the throat)

SOLAR PLEXUS

(use your fist or elbow to strike the center of the body)

GROIN

(kick, slap, punch, or grab and twist)

KNEES

(they only bend one way)

ANKLES

(stomp, kick, or even grab and yank it if you are on the ground)

.....

MORE MOVES

You can use any of these moves in addition to the ones above or alone. Remember that if someone is intent on hurting you it is important to stop that from happening. While you are being attacked yell with every strike, jab and kick. Continue to yell until you are free.

There are several weak spots on our bodies that you can kick, strike, or jab to disable an attacker. Kick the knee, in the front to cause pain or in the back and sides to knock them down. Strike the stomach, ribs and sides. Jab the elbows, wrists and shoulder joints. Stomp on their feet. As soon as possible, run to safety.

Wrist Twist: If they grab your arm use your free hand to grab and twist their wrist. Twist it as hard as you can. This will cause them to let go of your hand. Remember to yell.

Back Attack: If you are grabbed from behind yell and don't stop yelling until you are free. Stomp your foot down on their foot and dig your heel. Use your elbow to strike backwards into the attackers stomach. Then use your fist to hit the groin. Stomp onto their feet as much as possible. You can also propel yourself forward to knock off their balance. Throw your head back into their face. Your skull is heavy and will cause pain. Once your hands are free use the palm strike. Use your leg to kick, and your knee to hit. Run to safety.

Scratch or Bite: Scratch your attackers face or arms to cause pain. Draw blood. Not only does it cause pain to be clawed by fingernails, it also puts DNA under your fingernails. This way if you want to report the crime you will have some proof of who attacked you. If they put a hand over your mouth bite their hand. You do not need to draw blood, but biting hurts and this will give you a chance to yell. Don't freak out about catching

germs, if you get blood in your mouth spit it out.

Get Away: *Never let an attacker bring you into a car or a building.* Once they get you in a car or in their house you will be beaten, raped, tortured, and killed. Smart girls and women do not get in a car with a boy, a man, or a group they barely know. Even if they have a gun or knife you are more likely to survive if you stay in public. Gang rape happens. Sex trafficking happens. Murder happens. This information is not put here to scare you, but to prepare you.

BE AWARE, DON'T LIVE IN FEAR.

A combination of moves allows you to immobilize your attacker so they cannot run after you. Just one hit may not be enough. You can practice with a friend by holding up a thick cushion or pillow and pretending that is the attacker. **If attacked, be aggressive. Use all your strength and anger to fight back.**



REPORTING ASSAULT

Even if you are not injured or you manage to get away with all your possessions reporting an attack can help authorities bring dangerous people to justice.

If you are running from a violent attack that just happened get somewhere safe and call 911. If you are safely at home, work or school call the local non emergency number or go directly to the local police station. If possible go with a family member or a friend you trust. It can be very scary to report a crime and you need to feel safe so that you can remember important facts about the attack.

They will ask you many questions so try to record all that you can.

- What the attacker looked like and was wearing.
- The location where the attack occurred.
- How they attacked you.
- What, if anything, did they say before or during the attack.

- Had this person been following you.
- Was anyone nearby who might have seen the attack.

Your family member or friend should stay with you to provide emotional support. You don't have to go through a report alone. You don't have to answer questions about what you were wearing or if you were drinking. If you feel like the police are asking you questions that put the blame on you than it may be time to stop. State that you feel too tired to continue.

If you were sexually assaulted then be sure to not take a shower or change clothes. Authorities should give you access to a forensic nurse for examination. When giving your report, you can ask to have a member of the local SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) present. They are trained victim advocates and can give you support and information. Authorities should also have a rape kit created based on body fluid and blood samples from the attack. This will give them DNA evidence so the attacker can be identified and brought to justice.

**National Sexual Assault Helpline
1-800-656-4673**

.....

Three: LIVING FIERCE

It's great to know how to fight back against verbal and physical abuse in the face of danger. Even better is to learn to live fiercely with confidence and self worth everyday. Fierce isn't being loud, pushy, and mean. It's a feeling that no matter how many jerks cross your path, and no matter what obstacles get in your way, that you will always feel capable of protecting yourself.

Ever heard the saying "You have to respect yourself before anyone else can respect you" and thought that was a nice thought, but untrue in the real world? It took me years to realize that it actually works, but not all the time and not in every situation. The more you project self respect; the less likely a bully will take advantage of or assault you. This doesn't mean be a bully, but simply that you are capable and strong and willing to fight for your self preservation.

Of course the key words there are “less likely”. It doesn’t always work which is why sometimes it is best to walk or run away from a bully. Some people are always looking for a fight and it doesn’t matter if you back down or stand tall. Choose when to walk away and when to let something go. We each have the power to keep jerks from ruining our lives.

If you have a relative or person in your circle of friends that has a bad attitude towards you or is manipulative than limit your time around them. Actively stay away from that person because you can’t change their attitude. That person is the only one capable of change. Some jerks will give you a lame line about how they are the only person that could ever love you. That is a manipulative, cruel, untrue thing to say. It’s a popular line used by domestic abusers. Don’t fall into that trap. You are loveable and deserving of love.

You deserve to be treated with respect. Don’t ever let yourself fall into a victim mindset and think that you are not good enough or that you are less than others. We are all equal in deserving respect. Your wealth, social standing, country, or beliefs make you no better or worse than another person. It is our own thoughts that keep us separate and afraid to fight. It is our own beliefs that keep us down.

- Do you ever get mad at yourself and think how stupid you were for a mistake?
- Do you feel as if you deserve to be punished when you make a mistake?
- Do you let others get away with verbal abuse because you never stand up to them?

If you answered yes to any of those, than you are encouraging a victim mindset. You are allowing yourself to be less than others. The way we feel on the outside can be way more obvious than we realize. This is a dangerous attitude to project towards those who will take advantage of you. Stop thinking awful thoughts. Consider the idea that you are only a victim if you allow yourself to be. Does that sound like a bunch of self help fluff? Consider the following examples.

Have you ever read about someone who survived war, rape, false imprisonment, or tragedy with a positive attitude? That person will still have bad days and become sad or afraid, but they don’t let those feelings stay. Allow yourself times to feel sad, angry or discouraged. Your feelings are valid. Get out once you have vented. Don’t stay there so long that all

your good thoughts disappear and you become depressed.

Did you make so many mistakes one day or through out an entire week that all you can recall are the bad parts? Remember that EVERYONE makes mistakes. If we are distracted by an exorbitant amount of stress than those can multiply to the point where we get mad at ourselves and feel stupid. Be aware of this and give yourself a break. You are not stupid; you just had a bad day. If you feel like EVERYTHING you do is stupid than get some help. Find a therapy group or an individual counselor to guide you.

Do you see the pattern of how we must consciously decide how we personally deal with problems? First you believe you can change, than you take actions that cause change, and only then are you in control. Living fierce is totally and completely up to you.

It can be hard to project self respect when you feel imperfect or completely hopeless. The reality is that once we reach a certain age we have the abilities to change our situations, to leave abuse, and to stop being a victim. There are people and programs available to help us. Find them and allow them to help you. **Live in a way that makes you feel proud of who you are. This means following new paths that can be scary for us and uncomfortable for others.** Don't live to make others happy. Make yourself happy and then you will be able to do something amazing that makes the world better.

Once you are living fierce then you can use your knowledge to help others. Consider volunteering in your community or starting a program that creates positive change.

.....

FACE YOUR FEARS

We are given a lot of chances to be afraid and shown a lot of bad people willing to make it worse. Culture, beliefs, tradition, and the amount of crime where we live all give us reasons to be afraid. Some fears are valid and some are not. What are you afraid of? Look for other people who had the same fears as yours and see how they moved past those.

When you were really young you probably were scared of monsters under the bed or in dark spaces. You soon realize that the three eyed

monster with rows of teeth about doesn't exist. It was just imagination or cruelty. As you get older you learn that monsters do exist, but they don't live under the bed, and can seem as charming as royalty.

Most of our fears are like monsters under the bed. They are unnecessary and often untrue. Once someone has overcome a fear it can seem ridiculous to have ever believed in that fear. For real life monsters you now know how to keep them away and out of your life. Overcome your fears and the world opens up so many new opportunities.

I have overcome my fear of bullies by verbally standing up for myself and physically fighting back.

I overcame my fear of being ugly by no longer focusing on whatever flaws the "popular" consensus declared. I made a declaration to love my body.

I overcame my fear of public speaking by trying it out a few times and learning what style works for me.

A lot of fears vanish because as we age we (hopefully) learn from new experiences. Nothing would have changed if I continued to think I was not capable. I made a conscious decision to learn different ways of living and dealing with problems. I chose to change and be fierce. Some days are awful or sad because bad things happen and because I make mistakes, but more and more often I learn by being aware of what went wrong. I know that the next day could be amazing and it usually is. I stopped living in fear and became aware.

What are you afraid of? Write down everything you are afraid of and make yourself a pledge to overcome that fear. Whenever possible take time to cross one fear off your list. Look for opportunities to overcome your fears. You'll never know what you are capable of until you put yourself out there. And don't worry about failing, it happens to everyone. Live fierce.

.....

RESOURCES

The best way to learn physical self defense is taking a class with a certified trainer and to seeking out active communities of people that will respect you and protect your rights. Below is a list of organizations that

can help you. You can also check out your local gyms, community centers, colleges, and martial art schools that offer free or low cost self defense classes.

If you want to do even more start your own community group. You could have self defense classes every month, start initiatives that encourage emotional self defense, and work with your city, schools or employer on programs that reduce violence. The possibilities to create safe communities are bountiful. You just have to take that first step and get involved.

Just Yell Fire: Find a trainer who will visit your school or community center and teach a class. On the website you can watch a free movie about self defense. There are two separate videos. One is for middle and high school girls and one for college girls. **JustYellFire.com**

Girls Fight Back: A trainer will visit your school and give a presentation on self defense. There are also great resources on the website. **GirlsFightBack.com**

Meetup: Search for local self defense instruction and seminars or start one yourself. **Meetup.com**

Find a martial arts school near you with **DojoLocator.com** or the phone book.

Hollaback: A global initiative to end street harassment of women. You can upload videos or pictures of men on the street who have verbally or physically assaulted you. Learn from others experiences about what they did to stop harassment on the street or on public transportation. **Hollaback.org**

Men Can Stop Rape: This program gets to the root of the problem. Men and boys start clubs and become involved in creating a culture that respects women and reduces violence. **MenCanStopRape.org**

Impower You: Free information on important life skills such as physical and emotional self defense, workplace harassment, problem solving, critical thinking, and other empowering tools. **ImpowerYou.org**

.....

More books from Leah Oviedo

Fierce; A New Generation of Female Empowerment

In this book, young women are encouraged to ask questions, start discussions about equal rights and look for ways they can create positive change in their community. Part call to action and part informational, Fierce creates discussions with a new generation of females who have been raised with more opportunities and more equality than women of previous generations.

I Am More Than Just a Girl; Empowered, Informed, Equal

A fun interactive book for girls ages 13 and older. This book teaches girls about positive body image, violence prevention, women's rights, self defense, anger and stress management, education, community involvement, and more. It includes fun activities, journal pages, and help line numbers.

Word Art and Affirmations

What we think, read, and told influences our very thoughts which in turn influence our actions. When you fill your world with positive words it is a better place. Positive words make us happy, improve our self esteem and provide encouragement. This fun book includes a selection of colorful word art and affirmation exercises.

How Will You Create Positive Change?

Interviews with people around the world who are working towards better communities. They volunteer or work on issues such as health, violence, mentoring, education, equality, and sustainability.

We Will Create Positive Change!

Interviews with people around the world who are working and volunteering on environmental issues. From urban farming and organic produce to water conservation and seed saving, these stories will inspire you to create a sustainable world.

*All books are available at ImpowerYou.org, Bookemon.com and Amazon.com.